

# THE **MPL** RECORDER

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## AN MPL SURVEY: EKTACHROME EF, TYPE B— FINE FOR TV; USEFUL FOR PRODUCTION.

Beginning with our first issue, it has been the policy of THE MPL RECORDER to survey camera films after they have been in use long enough for cinematographers in the field to evaluate them and form opinions. Here's what our survey turned up on Eastman Ektachrome EF, Type B.

EKTACHROME EF, TYPE B, #7242, with ASA's of 80 and 125 (with 3200 K lamps) was intended primarily for filming TV news in color and for use in the industrial field for engineering sequential studies, high speed performance evaluations and in other similar fields where the original is used for projection and where a fast color film is essential. It is balanced for tungsten light and can be used indoors without a filter. It may also be used outdoors under daylight conditions with an 85 or 85 N series filter for conversion to the proper color balance and exposure. For best results, the film should be used at its normal index but the manufacturer's literature suggests that it can also be successfully rated at 250, 500 or even 1000 if forced processed by the laboratory.

In our discussions with users of the film, we found a wide divergence of opinion between TV and industrial users as compared to university, commercial and in-plant production units. Because these opinions varied so greatly, we have divided our report into two categories—television users and producers who deal primarily in a printed product.

### **Television News People Like EF-B**

TV news people interviewed were generally very well pleased with Type B film because of its speed and its availability with magnetic striping. They felt that EF Type B, used in combination with the Daylight film, was the only film available that would give them anywhere near the ASA they need to work with. "When you have to move into an area fast, shoot fast and get out, with no time to light, a fast color film like EF can save your neck." EF Type B was the film used most by everyone we interviewed. "This is a real fine film and we have shot some fine news footage with it, especially at night. We can pick up auto headlights at night, flashing sirens, wreck shots, fires. You name it, we can get it."

Most news people expose the film normally whenever they can but they have also found that force processing in difficult lighting conditions will still give a good picture. "I shot the symphony orchestra at the auditorium where you have a yellow hardwood floor and people dressed in black holding dark instruments. You can't put any more light on them—yours or auditorium spots—because you would blind the musicians. I shot Type B at ASA 500 and it came out good."

The film has also been rated at 1000 by many news people and most report good results.

Other news people report that they almost never force the film. "We shoot over 70,000 ft. of news film every month and all of it is EF Type B. We never force any of it because we do not feel that it is necessary and because we don't like the grain or the contrast in forced EF."

### **Magnetic Stripe On EF Is A Big Help**

The magnetic sound on EF has been very well received by TV people. Most use it only for news and one-time TV spots although quite a few are using it for documentaries and TV spot production. They report good quality broadcast sound and acceptable sound for location documentary work where the end product is a color sound print. "The great thing about this magnetic sound is that you can force process the picture however you need to and the sound still comes out good. With optical single system, you always had to think about sound quality in force processing and to try to find a happy medium that would give acceptable picture without ruining the sound track."

Most television film makers who like the sound for news broadcast prefer to use double system sound for their documentary and TV spot work. Others use single system magnetic for all their work and are basically satisfied with the results.

Laboratory sound people are very critical of sound on magnetic stripe although they realize that it is quite often location sound and should not be compared to studio double system sound. They feel that the problem with magnetic stripe lies with the operator rather than with the medium. Many people are inclined to override the track and end up with distortion and excessive sibilance caused by an overmodulated track. One producer, who reported successful use of stripe sound for non-TV use, said that he was always careful to peak the sound at 90 instead of 100 to avoid overmodulation.

Another problem presented by magnetic striped sound for production work is the danger of tearing or otherwise damaging the original when the sound is dubbed to sprocketed film or to optical track. "We transfer someone's original stripe sound nearly every day but we never quite get over the fear that something will happen to the original." Many people who use magnetic stripe for their production work realize the dangers and the short comings of stripe sound but are willing to accept them to get lip sync sound. "This is the only way that we can do the documentary work that we feel we must do. Maybe one day we can go to double system but right now we have to share equipment with the news department and single system is the only equipment available."

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## SURVEY: EKTACHROME EF (Con't)

One sound engineer pointed out the fact that there are no industry standards for playback of magnetic stripe. "SMPTE has standard tapes for 16mm magnetic film but they don't have anything I can use as a standard to set up my equipment for playback of striped sound. And, it doesn't look to me like they plan to any time in the future."

### **Many TV Film Makers Use EF For Production**

Many television stations also shoot local programming and TV spots with EF Type B. Some of the cameramen who double in news and production think that EF is good for both purposes. "Type B is my primary load for shooting TV spots and it is the only film that will do what I need to do. I shoot nearly all my material on location and I carry four 1000 quartz lights and three small sun guns. Because of poor or undependable power sources on location, all I can usually use are three of the four big lights so I have to shoot a film with a lot of speed. Everything I shoot goes on the air as an original and the problem I have with Type B is that I have to watch out for the green."

"Sometimes I project the original and it looks good but when it airs, you can see green in the shadows, in people's hair, in all marginal light situations. I don't know how much of this greenness to blame on the film, on the processing or on the chain but I know that I have to overexpose my EF to stay out of the green shoulder. Once, before I found out just how deadly the green shoulder could be, I even had green looking fried chicken and this can kill you."

Several people reported trouble with excessive green in connection with fluorescent lights. "When we have to shoot in a situation like this, we override the film with quartz lights and eliminate the excessive green." Most felt that there was no real solution to the problem, especially if you had a combination of fluorescents and daylight spilling in from outside. "We try to overpower it with our quartz lights, using Type B with a dichroic filter. This filter cuts the speed down to 80 and sometimes this just won't do the job. That's when we go to the Daylight EF with an 85 filter."

One TV cinematographer who was quite sold on EF as a news film rejected it almost completely for his production work. "It looks pretty bad when it's printed. It's too grainy and too contrasty. It might work better if Kodak would give us a low contrast print stock to print it on. Right now, EF looks terrible on 7387 or the Ektachrome 7386. They have been promising us a low contrast stock for some time but I still haven't seen it." (Editor's Note: Kodak says 7388, low contrast color printing stock, is now available.)

"I shoot all my production work on ECO (Ektachrome Commercial #7255) and it looks good printed. We have in-house processing of EF but I think the prints from ECO are well worth the extra time and expense involved in sending the ECO out for processing and printing."

This statement was contradicted by the film director of another station who shoots television spots on EF. "We like EF very much—both printed and for air use. We think it is so good that we no longer use any ECO for any purpose."

One big booster of the EF films said his biggest problem with EF was getting the 3200 K light required for shooting. Others who reported the same problem usually felt that the content of the material was more important than any color shift they might get in a situation where they could not get 3200 K lights.

**TO SUM UP:** Television people like EF very much when the original is projected for TV broadcast. Some like it just as

well for prints; others use it for material to be printed only when they must. One man's comment on the Ektachrome films sums up the feeling of TV people in general in regard to EF: "We like the EF films very much. They supplement and compliment one another extremely well. We believe that these color films used as a package are actually more versatile for our use than the black and white films. The film is fine—projected or printed. It couldn't be better!"

### **Most Producers Have Reservations About EF**

People who do not project or air their original and who print all their color are not as enthusiastic about EF as TV people are. (People interviewed included commercial producers, in-house producers for agencies, church groups and national organizations, university producers and in-plant producers who deal primarily in color to be printed.)

EF IS MUCH BETTER THAN THE OLD ER. This was about the only universally held opinion that we received on EF. Everyone we talked to commented on the great improvement in grain, sharpness and color in EF as compared to ER. (Someone even commented that the great improvements over ER pleased people so much that it made them more tolerant of shortcomings with EF.) Many people also mentioned the fact that they felt that EF was very dependable from batch to batch where with ER they had noted inconsistencies that could not be explained by exposure or processing.

### **It Is A Special Purpose Film**

Most of the people we interviewed classified EF as a special purpose film as opposed to a film for everyday use. "EF is a film to be used only when you cannot use ECO. If you accept this fact and quit trying to make it do something it just is not intended to do, it can be quite useful. I'm thankful we have it when we need it and I'm willing to use it if the job needs it."

Many producers felt it was a good film for location shots. "I think that EF is an excellent film for location shooting. We recently shot EF in a meat packing plant where beef carcasses were lined up in a building a block long. All the light was dim and it was a little bit high in the infra-red spectrum as compared to normal light. There was so little light in the area that we decided to shoot at normal ASA of 125 and to run the film at 8 frames a second. We slowed down the action of the talent and were able to shoot the sequence without bringing in any extra light. With a little bit of color correction at the lab, the color came out fine and the client was well pleased. We think that EF is the answer to the problem of getting color where lighting circumstances are so tough that we wouldn't get a picture without it."

Many producers, who said that they didn't really like EF, said that it was a very good film for night shots. "One of the best uses I've found for it is for shooting at night—things like theatre marquees, lights on Main Street, etc. These results have been impressive and I have no qualms about using it for this purpose." Another man who said that he never used anything but ECO unless it was absolutely imperative found that he could get "some spectacular shots at night" and that he did consider EF a good addition to the films available to a producer. "I lit the exterior of an observatory at night with three 650 quartz lights, shot at ASA 125, processed it normal and it came out beautiful. Without EF, I would have

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## EF SURVEY (Con't)

written this shot out of the production or told the client we couldn't get it."

Another producer who usually shot ECO pointed out a studio use he had made of EF. "I found that I could use EF very effectively to get more depth of field. One spot we shot called for an extreme close up of some eggs with a title supered in the camera via a glass mounted in front of the lens. Using EF, I was able to stop down enough to get sharp focus on the eggs and on the title. The shot came out well and I think it matched the ECO used for the rest of the spot surprisingly well."

### EF Prints Poorly

The main complaint with EF was about the way it looked when printed. "I don't like EF and I seldom use it. The color is poor and you can't get good color prints even if you get good color correction at the lab. The only time I ever shot EF and felt pleased with the production was on a hurry-up job we did for a customer who projected the original. We got the assignment only a few days before the film was to be used and there was no time for a print."

"The customer wanted to show his stockholders pictures of the new buildings under construction and the new equipment recently put into operation. The lighting situations were terrible and EF was the only thing we could shoot. We edited the original, prepared a 16mm magnetic mixed track and ran the original and track in interlock on a Siemens projector. I was really surprised at how good it looked."

Because of the way EF looks when printed, many producers avoid the use of it in the scripting and planning stages. "Sure, it's better than ER, but I try to see that my scripts are written so that I don't have to use it."

"If I do shoot EF, I shoot with the idea in mind that I do not have to use it in the film. I cover myself by planning ways to cut around or dissolve away from the footage if I want to after I see the work print."

### Other Complaints About EF

1. Too much grain. "I don't like the grain in the high speed films, particularly in the blacks. 2. Black areas go green. "I never use EF unless I can light the area evenly because the blacks look green and I dislike this very much. I don't think the film has any real blacks." 3. Too much contrast. "EF is much too contrasty, particularly when it is printed. I realize that this problem is compounded by the fact that so often subjects shot on EF are contrasty and so are the lighting conditions involved. Can't they give us a high speed film with lower contrast?" 4. Low in color saturation. "It would be a good film except for the fact that the colors aren't bright. They definitely lack the brilliance that I like to see in color." 5. Colors are too cool. "All the EF I've seen has been too far on the cool side. I like to see warmth in my color and you just can't seem to get any with EF."

### Intercutting With ECO

6. EF intercuts poorly with ECO. "The color in EF is so objectionable when intercut with ECO that my customers notice it and ask me, what happened? What did you do wrong? The client doesn't understand the problems you have in shooting in factories or show rooms with fluorescent lights."

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## McGeary Speaking-

### GOOD DISTRIBUTION IS VITAL FOR SUCCESS

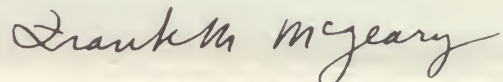
Lately we have become very concerned over the fact that too many fine pictures get little "play" or circulation after they are completed and ready to release. In the early stages of the production, the producer talks to us in terms of hundreds of prints that his client will be needing to meet the demands of enthusiastic viewers. Then, when it is finished, nothing happens and the picture sits in the film vault, untouched and unwanted.

Because this happens so often, we have made a special effort to find out what causes the neglect of so many films, many of which are really very good. In an effort to find out, we talked to a lot of people and we heard a lot of explanations. Although there is no one cause for this problem, we believe that the biggest trouble is that clients are sold pictures without any thought being given to how the picture will reach its ultimate audience.

There are many ways to get a film to the audience—through commercial distributors, through in-house distribution, through catalog listings. A producer who really wants to help his client will gather this information, make it available to the client and help him decide which method is best for the film he wants to produce.

There is plenty of written material on distribution for the man who cares enough to inform himself on the subject. We have run several stories on distribution in past issues of THE MPL RECORDER and the subject is also covered in Kodak's booklet, "Movies Move People." Or a good commercial distributor can assist in setting up a program to get the film to the viewer.

Getting the film to the audience is more than just proper ethics; it is also good business. If the film is successful and the client is pleased, he will remember that your name is on it and he will probably be back for more of the same.



Frank M. McGeary

P.S. In the last issue, we conversed about "Whatever Happened to the Answer Print?" We received a lot of comments from people who had read it but the best one came from a friend of ours in the Midwest. "Say, I read your editorial and I agree with you 100 per cent. Checking the answer print is very important, but I just have to have prints on the air Friday at four different stations. So won't you please skip the answer print and make all four prints at the same time?"

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## SURVEY -- Concluded

All he wants is for you to get in, get your pictures and get out of his hair. But still he wants top quality pictures. Rather than have him be this critical of my end product, I tell him we can't do it."

One producer pointed out that EF could be intercut with ECO with pretty good results provided it was not done scene to scene within a sequence. "When I shoot EF, I shoot the whole sequence with EF. I never try to shoot just one scene with EF and cut it into the middle of an ECO sequence. For example, if we have a sequence of a person arriving by airplane, we shoot the arrival shot, the terminal shot and the shot of them getting into the cab outside—all with EF film. The next shot on ECO would be a different sequence and people are more apt to accept the color, grain and contrast difference."

One director, who had heard that ECO and EF would intercut, reported that he ran a test to see for himself. "I shot the same person with the same camera in the same position in the same room on both ECO and EF with a time lapse of about five minutes between shots. The lab processed the films on the same day. I could see a great difference between the printed EF and ECO. The EF was blue, too contrasty and I didn't like the grain."

Not everyone felt that intercutting was a problem. Several producers reported good results when intercutting the two films. One reported that he had run a split-screen test with ECO and EF and found that EF compared favorably to ECO.

Several people commented that Kodak had not intended EF for production work where the material would be printed. They said that "EF was made for the space and TV people who project their original." "It was always my understanding that Eastman had said that EF should not be intercut with ECO."

Someone said that "you can't make any blanket statements about how ECO and EF will intercut. Some EF intercuts well and some looks pretty bad. How they will look printed depends on how the original film looks. If the EF is well exposed and if the color is not radically changed by fluorescent lights, it can be quite acceptable. If it is forced or poorly exposed, it won't look good."

One producer who basically disliked EF reported one very good experience with it. "We shot one entire short film on EF and I was quite pleased with the color reversal prints we got. This was a news type film of a beauty contest—a catch-as-catch-can fashion and beauty show on a runway. We had to shoot interviews, group shots and auditorium shots with all kinds of mixed light sources and no control over the subject or the conditions. We used no ECO and shot the whole film on EF Type B. My experience with this film made me realize that EF could be all right if you were careful how you used it."

### **Skin Tones Can Be Helped**

7. The skin tones are poor on EF. "Skin tones on EF seem inclined to go green and, once you get that green, you're stuck with it. The lab really can't correct it without hurting the rest of the color." Others called the skin tones blue, cool or even "beefy red."

One director felt that skin tone problems could be minimized with more care in lighting and with the use of makeup. "When you light with EF, you really have to be very careful with the light. Many times, when you are using quartz iodine lights, you have a rather narrow, high intensity beam. If you



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have that light on the subject's face and if you are a bit careless with your background light, the background will go too dark and the faces will be washed out.

"Facial tones are very sensitive to color values. Bad color in the skin hits everyone, even laymen, right in the eye. We believe that the average producer could improve the skin tones in his work considerably if he would use make up. It really surprises me to find out how many of them don't use it. The use of makeup will give your work a more professional polish by giving more consistency to skin tone color. Skin tones differ from person to person. One is reddish, the next is blue and the next yellow. It's hard to make these different facial tones all come out right without makeup.

"Not only does makeup give assistance with color but it is also useful in covering up blemishes like freckles, liver spots or pimples. You get a pimple on a face in close up and it seems to fill up the whole screen. We always use makeup in the studio and we use it on location whenever we can."

### **What's Good About EF?**

1. "It's good to use on location where it is physically impossible to bring in enough light to use ECO. With quartz lights and EF, you can get reasonably good pictures under very rough lighting conditions." 2. "EF is a good film for all around use—for TV, production and industrial studies. Somebody surely must like it. The use of EF has increased two or three times in the last year." 3. "EF intercuts well with ECO." (Debatable point. See earlier discussion.) 4. "You can shoot in difficult lighting situations with EF without bringing along a lot of lighting equipment or increasing personnel needed to do all the extra work." 5. You can force EF and still come up with footage that looks good printed. "We filmed the governor's inaugural ball with EF, forced it at ASA 500 and it looked good printed. The Ball took place in a large auditorium with illumination coming from arcs in the 6000 K range, from spots and from overhead lights and we were constantly shifting in exposures and color values as the lighting changed. We were astonished at how well the film managed to hold up under these adverse conditions."

EDITED BY: Lynn Bigbee

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